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MONTANA DNRC Conversation

A Newsletter of the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation • Director Bud Clinch

Volume 3 • Number 1 • January 1997

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

For the next few months, much of the "energy" among the administrators and myself will be focused toward the legislature. Natural resource issues continue to maintain the interest of legislators and lobbyists, and there is never a shortage of legislation affecting the department.

Eight bills have been submitted at the department's request and are at various stages of the legislative process. These bills affect oil and gas leasing, unauthorized construction on state land, cash leasing, resource development funding, grant and loan agreements with the tribes, emergency loan increases, water laws, and forestry rule-making authority. I'm optimistic about the chances of getting many of these bills signed into law. Part of this optimism stems from efforts before the session to inform legislators and special interest groups about our proposed legislation. In December we met with legislators and special interest groups in Havre, Glasgow, Billings, Miles City, Bozeman, Helena, and Kalispell to discuss concerns and answer questions. I believe that these meetings were beneficial to legislators and the department alike.

We are tracking more than 150 bills that potentially impact the department's responsibilities, programs, or personnel. In addition, the department has been meeting with members of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Claims Joint Subcommittee daily to present and defend our proposed budget for fiscal years 1998 and 1999. During this biennium we will be seeking about $55 million as part of the Governor's Executive Budget to conduct our planned programs and activities. We are also requesting a supplemental appropriation of nearly $4.5 million from the general fund to pay for fire suppression costs incurred during the current biennium. In addition, appropriations are being sought for funding capital construction projects, grants for reclamation and development projects, and grants and loans for water development and renewable resource development projects.

Director Bud Clinch

Photo by Jim Bond

This legislative agenda requires the administrators, chief legal counsel, and myself to meet each day to coordinate our efforts to review legislation, prepare testimony and fiscal notes, and respond to legislative requests for counsel and information. Few days go by during the legislative session without requiring some form of department involvement.

The fact that DNRC enjoys a great deal of respect, credibility, and confidence shown by the public is a tribute to your efforts.

In spite of concern over state government growth and bureaucracy, strong legislative support continues for many of the department's programs. This support comes not so much from my efforts, but from the public support you are building daily with your work all across the state on behalf of this department. The fact that DNRC enjoys a great deal of respect, credibility, and confidence shown by the public is a tribute to your efforts.

"To help ensure Montana's land and water resources provide benefits for present and future generations."

PROGRAM FOCUS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN GLASGOW?

On June 28, 1995, Glasgow became the site of the first co-location of a field office from the former Department of State Lands with a field office from the old DNRC. The move has been beneficial for both the Glasgow Unit Office and the Glasgow Water Resources Regional Office in several ways, including the quality and downtown location of the rental space, cost-effectiveness of the facilities, parking, cleaning services, and shared expenses for telephones and major equipment.

Glasgow Unit Office

The vastness of the Glasgow Unit is impressive—nearly 1 million (944,605) acres of state-owned land in the northeastern corner of Montana. A subdivision of the Northeastern Land Office (Lewistown), the Glasgow Unit Office serves the Trust Lands Management Division (TLMD) in managing and administering all state-owned land, and navigable rivers and streams, in a geographic area that includes seven counties (Daniels, Garfield, McCone, Phillips, Roosevelt, Sheridan, and Valley). The office serves those who use state-owned land now, and those who seek to use it under such arrangements as leases, easements, and permits. As is the case with all state-owned land, monetary receipts go to benefit Montana's public schools and other endowed institutions.

The office has supervisory and administrative duties, performs all operational field activities for the four TLMD bureaus, and is responsible for all day-to-day operations within the region. Responsibilities include lease administration, improvements, rights-of-way, grazing, agricultural production, federal farm program compliance, oil and gas permits, seismic permits, metalliferous and non-metalliferous permits, land use licenses for other uses, and administration of recreational use. The office provides assistance with resource management, state lands production, and payment review. It also provides wildland fire suppression support on all private and state lands within the seven counties, as well as assistance throughout the area.

The Glasgow Unit Office's activities center around agriculture and grazing issues. The three-person staff administers 2,056 leases representing 2,932 tracts of land. Grazing (164,669 AUMs in fiscal year 1996) is a major use, since rangeland makes up about three-quarters (750,000 acres) of the state-owned land. Nearly 200,000 acres are farmland, with 124,334 of those actually being farmed and the other 68,331 in the Conservation Reserve Program. Each lease is reviewed once every 10 years.

Unit Office staff (from left): Jeanine Markle, Hoyt Richards, and Randy Dirkson

Photo by Ron Miller

Hoyt Richards has been the manager of the Glasgow Unit Office for less than a year, since March 1996. Responsible for such a large geographic area and wide variety of uses, Hoyt finds that budgeting his time is a very challenging part of the job. Born in Hot Springs and raised in Plentywood, Hoyt holds a B.S. in wildlife biology from the University of Montana; he is currently writing a thesis for a M.S. in ecology from the University of Missouri. He worked for the National Park Service (at Glacier National Park) and the U.S. Forest Service (at Mt. Hood National Forest and Mark Twain National Forest) before coming to DNRC.

Randy Dirkson is a land use specialist who started working for the department in 1975. He was born in Billings but raised near Lewistown, graduating from Hobson High School. Randy's former employers

include Beil Pipe and Tank Company and the Billings Livestock Commission. He spends 90 percent of his time in the field, doing inspections of current, proposed, and even past uses (reclamation or other follow-up).

Jeanine Markle, who works part-time, has been the office manager since 1986. She provides administrative support for the whole range of natural resource programs. Because of new technology, specifically computer access to central records, the field office now deals with a wider variety of duties. Jeanine graduated from Glasgow High School, attended the University of Montana, and substitute teaches at both the middle school and high school levels. Before starting employment with DNRC, Jeanine had worked for the Valley County clerk and recorder and the county appraiser.

Water Resources Regional Office

The Glasgow Water Resources Regional Office serves the public regarding water resource issues and concerns in an area in northeastern Montana that covers more than 18 million acres. Its geographic boundaries include ten counties: Dawson, Richland, and Wibaux Counties, in addition to the same seven counties served by the Glasgow Unit Office.

Key issues affecting the regional office include controversial and complex water availability problems in the Milk River basin, the federal Missouri River Management Plan that affects storage in Fort Peck Reservoir, the Sheridan County groundwater reservations near Medicine Lake and Dagmar that have affected new and changed water uses, and the proposed Fort Peck Rural Water Project, which is planned to serve 600 water users, 3,000 cattle, and 24,000 acres of land.

Photo by Pam Waterson

Water Resources Regional Office staff (from left): Ron Miller, Brent Esplin, Pam Wienmeister, and Bob Larson

The Glasgow office serves the public regarding water resources, rights, and concerns. Program responsibilities include assisting the public in connection with new water appropriations, changes in water rights, records management, dam safety, water management, state water planning, floodplain management, state-owned water projects, and reclamation and development grants. The office also provides assistance to the Montana Water Court in water rights adjudications, to the Reserved Water Rights Compact Commission, and to the Board of Water Well Contractors. Four persons make up the staff of DNRC's Glasgow Water Resources Regional Office.

Bob Larson has been the manager for the Havre Water Resources Regional Office for 18 years and has remotely supervised the Glasgow office for the past four years. Bob has a B.S. in civil engineering from Montana State University and, previous to his employment with DNRC, spent two years working for the Bureau of Engineers of the City of Los Angeles and five years working for the U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service in Montana. Along with his management and supervisory duties, Bob approves water right permit applications and changes, investigates water use complaints, and assists the public and other state and federal agencies with water management issues and concerns.

Pam Wienmeister is a program assistant who has been with the Glasgow office for 12 years. Pam processes various documents involving the use of surface water and groundwater for the new appropriations program. She also provides adjudication program technical assistance and water right research, information, and public assistance. Additionally, Pam provides support for the Board of Water Well Contractors and the water management, state water projects, floodplain management, and dam safety programs.

Glasgow. . . *continued on page 4*

PROGRAM FOCUS

Glasgow. . . *continued from page 3*

Ron Miller, appropriations specialist, has been with the Glasgow office for 11 years. He processes applications for new water uses and changes to existing water rights. Ron also provides technical assistance and support for the adjudication, water management, state water projects, floodplain management, and dam safety programs. Ron represents the department throughout the region, acting as a technical contact on various water-related matters and serving on a multi-state task force concerning water supply issues. Ron recently testified before U.S. Senate and House committees in support of the Fort Peck Rural Water Project.

On May 6, 1996, **Brent Esplin** started his job in the Glasgow office as a water resource planner/hydrologist for the Milk River basin. He has a B.S. in civil engineering from Utah State University and is finishing a thesis for a M.S., also in civil engineering with emphasis in water management/hydrology. Brent works with water users, and he is currently involved with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation concerning the Milk River Project, and with the Saskatchewan, Canada, Interagency Technical Working Committee concerning a basin management plan.

Note: Much of the information on the Glasgow Water Resources Regional Office and its staff was adapted from an article appearing in the Fall 1996 issue of DNRC's *Water Lines* newsletter.

EAST FORK ROCK CREEK ON ICE

Work on the East Fork Rock Creek Dam in Granite County has mostly been completed for the winter.

The emergency at this state-owned dam, which is managed by DNRC, began last June. The appearance of muddy water below the dam and the subsequent development of a sinkhole on the dam's downstream face led to fears of dam failure and the evacuation of an area extending 20 miles below the dam.

Rehabilitation included replacement of the main drain (with three heavy-duty plastic drains), construction of a chimney drain, installation of another subsurface drain, lining and reinforcement of a culvert, and reconstruction of the clay blanket. The toe berm is done, and all planned components are in place. Some finish work on the upstream and downstream faces of the dam and final reclamation, including re-seeding, will be completed this spring and summer.

The monitoring wells and relief wells still need to be finished to their permanent level at the tops of the wells. Also, a funding request is being presented to the legislature for an emergency warning system.

From the onset of the crisis, the situation has been characterized by cooperation and shared information among DNRC, Granite County officials, additional agencies, and the public. The emergency also serves as an example of excellent cooperation among DNRC divisions. Many of the Water Resources Division employees assisting Incident Commander Rick Bondy were mentioned in the October 1996 issue of *DNRConversation*, but help was also provided throughout the crisis by Anna Miller, John Tubbs, and Bob Fischer (Conservation and Resource Development Division); Ann Bauchman, Anne Yates, Randy Mosley, and Jim Bond (Centralized Services Division/Director's Office); Mike McLane and Jack Stults (Water Resources Division); and Tom McIsaac (Forestry Division). Everyone's efforts are appreciated.

IT'S YOUR TURN . . .

We'd like to have a regular column in *DNRConversation* that features employee letters, questions, and comments. Several employees made this suggestion during last summer's readership survey, and we think it's a good idea.

It will work, however, only if you contribute. Please send your letters, questions, and editorials to Carole Massman at 1625 Eleventh Avenue, Helena, MT 59620-1601, or use ZIP!Office. Then we can include them in an "It's Your Turn" column.

Remember, too, that you're always invited to submit news articles and photographs.

DNRConversation is an employee newsletter published by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation.

Editor ..... Carole Massman
Design and Layout ..... Ross Campbell
Photographer ..... Jim Bond

Please send news articles or ideas for articles to Carole Massman, 1625 Eleventh Avenue, Helena, MT 59620-1601; call her at 406 444-6737; or use Zip!Mail.

DEPARTMENT NEWS

INFO TECH NEWS

This article is the first of a series to be prepared by the Information Technology Bureau (ITB) to update DNRC employees on developments in the information technology world. The articles will examine current state and agency information systems and explore new developments in computer hardware and software. This installment looks at the new state electronic bulletin board system (BBS).

In 1993 the legislature passed House Bill No. 520, which made the state electronic bulletin board a permanent state service. The intent of the bill was to make state government more accessible to the public. The bulletin board went on line in May 1994. Since that time, it has gone through several major and minor changes. The latest change was major.

In November 1996, the state bulletin board was changed from a DOS-based system managed by the Department of Administration's Information Services Division to a Windows-based system managed by the Office of Public Instruction (OPI). The new system provides an enhanced user interface and capabilities that were not available before. Currently, the BBS is an excellent resource for information on the 1997 legislature.

The BBS can be accessed either by modem or by a TCP/IP connection. Helena and Missoula users on Novell networks can connect to the BBS through Summitnet using TCP/IP. Other department users can use a modem for dial-up access.

BBS software is required for your desktop computer. Users can get the BBS software from the ITB staff or through a modem connection to the BBS host computer. To get the software from the OPI host computer, use any communications software (Windows Terminal, Procomm), and dial one of the BBS phone numbers: 444-5648 for local (Helena) access, and 800-962-1729 for toll-free calls in Montana. Follow the instructions on the screen to download and install the software.

Contact Bob Auer (444-4948), Jack Zanto (444-6715), or Jim Bond (444-6743) for assistance with BBS installation, configuration, and use.

PAY PLAN IN COMMITTEE

The pay plan bill, HB 13, has been referred to the House Appropriations Committee. HB 13 would provide a 1 percent increase in pay for fiscal year 1998 plus market adjustments (up to 4 percent) for those who have not reached their target market ratio. The bill also would give the Department of Administration the authority to develop an alternative classification and pay system that is consistent with the market-based approach to pay administration, but emphasizes individual skills and competencies. If approved by the legislature, this pay system would not be implemented for several (probably two to four) years.

TRAVEL POLICY ADOPTED

DNRC Director Bud Clinch has signed a new policy addressing travel and travel reimbursements. The payroll office will distribute copies of the policy with the paychecks on January 29. The policy includes a form for requesting travel advances that will be required for all travel advances processed after January 29.

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Between 50 and 75 persons attended the Helena DNRC Christmas party, which was held at the Eagles Lodge from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on December 12, 1996. The format for the event was decided by the results of an earlier survey indicating that Helena-based employees preferred an informal, after-work social hour. Snack trays of meat, cheese, fruit, and vegetables were provided, along with rolls, condiments, coffee, and punch. A popular Helena musical group, the Parlour Pickers, performed for an hour.

Christmas Party Committee members Kathy Coey, Dolores Eustace, Gary Fischer, Glenna McClure, Randy Mosley, Patrick Rennie, Nelda Sayer, and Joan Specking organized the party. Patrick also acted as master of ceremonies, announcing the winners of the raffle and the door prizes donated by committee members and other employees.

Persons attending commented favorably on the relaxed, enjoyable atmosphere.

DEPARTMENT NEWS

ADOPTING A ~~FAMILY~~ COTTAGE

At part of its Christmas activities, the DNRC Employee Fund Committee usually participates in the Adopt-A-Family Program. This year it decided to do things a little differently and instead adopted one cottage at the Intermountain Children's Home in Helena. Employees were asked to contribute toys, clothing, and other gifts to make the holiday a little brighter for Josh, Lorraine, Jerry, Marty, Roberta, Justin, Jacob, and Sam, the eight children (ages 4 to 12) who occupy Bridger Cottage.

After collecting donations from the Placer Center, New York Store, and USF&G Building, the committee took inventory of each child's wish list. Carol Skufka (of Centralized Services Division), Cindy Forgey and Shirley Machonis (of Water Resources Division), and Joan Specking (of the Reserved Water Rights Compact Commission staff) then shopped for the remainder of the needed items. Available funds included $50 from the employee fund, $175 in direct donations from DNRC employees, and $50 from the Christmas Party Committee that was not used for that event. A number of other employees also helped with planning and promoting the campaign and purchasing, wrapping, and delivering the gifts.

The Intermountain Children's Home indicated that many of these children have gone completely without Christmas gifts in the past. The counselors there send their sincere thanks and a "*God Bless You!*" to the many generous DNRC employees who made this year's drive a success.

DEPARTMENT STAFF

WILLIS RETIREMENT/ RECEPTION

Personnel Director Gary Willis will retire January 31, 1997. Everyone is invited to bid him farewell at an open house in his honor on January 29 in the basement conference room of the USF&G Building in Helena. The festivities will start at 1:00 p.m., and refreshments will be served.

Gary began employment with state government in August 1969. He joined the staff of the Department of State Lands on September 14, 1981, following several years as Personnel Officer at the Office of Public Instruction. Before coming to work for state government, Gary was employed by the Lewis and Clark County Sheriff's Office and the City of Helena Police Department.

As Personnel Director for DNRC, Gary was instrumental in getting policies and procedures in place immediately following reorganization. During his career with state government, he has been the recipient of numerous awards and continues to serve with the utmost integrity and dedication.

Gary Willis *Photo by Jim Bond*

What are Gary's future plans? It's understood that he intends to sell real estate in the near future and, of course, will most likely spend a little time in Las Vegas.

The department wishes Gary good luck in his next adventure. Please remember to join us on January 29 in showing our appreciation to Gary for his service to the State of Montana.

DEPARTMENT STAFF

FIREFIGHTING EXCELLENCE AWARD

Rebecca West, fire prevention team leader in DNRC's Kalispell Unit Office, received the 1996 Blackfoot Forest Protective Association (BFPA) Award for Firefighting Excellence. The award acknowledges superior performance on the part of a DNRC seasonal firefighter.

On October 23, 1996, Forestry Division Administrator Don Artley presented Rebecca with a plaque for her efforts. Rebecca also was presented a $1,000.00 check by Gareth Moon, BFPA director. Moon has formerly served both as Forestry Division Administrator and as State Land Commissioner.

Photo by Mike Kopitzke

Award-winning Rebecca West with (from left) Don Artley, Jon Dahlberg (manager of the Northwestern Land Office), and Gareth Moon

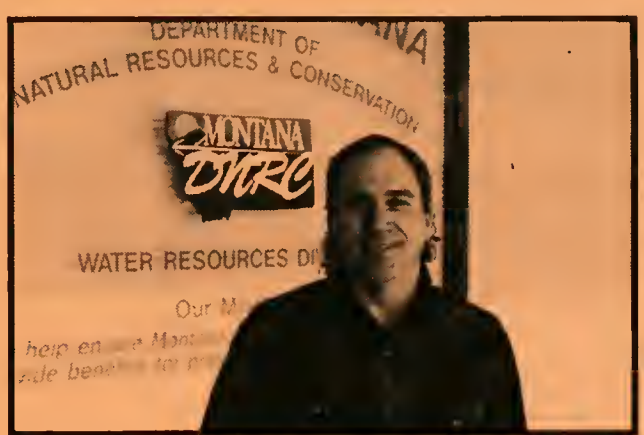
Thirteen DNRC seasonal firefighters were nominated by their supervisors. Robert Gustafson, engine boss at the Anaconda Unit, and Rowdy Ogden, Morrell Mountain lookout for the Clearwater Unit, were also finalists for the 1996 award.

SIROKY APPOINTED

Laurence Siroky has been appointed to a three-year term on the Board of Water Well Contractors. Laurence is currently chief of the Water Operations Bureau and has previously served as chief of the Water Rights Bureau. As DNRC's representative on the board, he replaces Ron Guse, whose term has ended (and who recently retired).

The five-member board, which is attached to the department for administrative purposes, is a quasi-judicial body that licenses well drillers and administers well construction standards. It issues, suspends, and revokes licenses; establishes training and enforcement procedures; investigates complaints; and holds disciplinary hearings.

In addition to the representative from DNRC, the board consists of two members (Chairman Wes Lindsay and Pat Byrne) who represent the water well industry and are appointed by the governor, one member (John Arrigo) from the Department of Environmental Quality, and one member (Bob Bergantino) from the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology.



Laurence Siroky

Photo by Jim Bond

Laurence will serve as DNRC's liaison with the licensing board. He brings experience not only with wells, but also with water resources engineering, water rights, water projects, and dams.

DEPARTMENT STAFF

BUREAU CHIEF HOLMAN RETIRES

Photo by Jim Bond

Larry Holman

Larry Holman wrapped up a 27-year career with state government on December 31, 1996. As chief of DNRC's Water Rights Bureau since 1983, Larry has been involved with regulation and management issues dealing with water. Larry's work in this controversial field has been characterized by the diplomacy, insight, and extensive knowledge he exercised in resolving problems and guiding policy and legislative developments.

Larry served as bureau chief for almost 14 years. Before that, he managed a DNRC weather modification research program (called HIPLEX) in Miles City from 1975 to 1983. He has also worked as an air pollution meteorologist for the state Department of Health and Environmental Sciences (now DEQ). He holds a B.S. in earth science and a M.S. in meteorology, both from Montana State University.

Larry has been active in various civic, church, and sport-related activities, including officiating at high school and college football and basketball games. He intends to continue managing irrigation and cattle operations at a family farm and ranch with holdings in Broadwater and Phillips Counties.

Thanks for all you have contributed to DNRC, Larry. *Best wishes in your future endeavors!*

NEW FACES, NEW JOBS

These persons either started employment with DNRC or changed positions within the agency from October through December 1996. We wish you success in your new job!

Shirley Machonis was hired October 9, 1996, in the Water Resources Division in an administrative support position (desktop publishing/word processing). Shirley brings to DNRC a wide variety of experience in the field of desktop publishing. She most recently worked for Concept Communications in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Linda Wareham joined the staff of the Conservation and Resource Development Division (CARDD). Linda is not a stranger to the USF&G Building; she previously worked in the Reclamation Division of DSL before leaving to own and manage a restaurant in Boulder. Linda provides administrative support to CARDD. Welcome back!

Susan Russell came to DNRC on December 7, 1996, to fill the position of legal secretary. She was previously a paralegal assistant at the Department of Commerce. If you have been in the Director's Office recently, you have noticed Susan at the desk Sherry Beaupert used to occupy.

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